

The Christie Effects: the aims of crime fiction made by Agatha Christie.

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Abstract. This work's objective is to determine and comprehend the restructured of the crime fiction literary genre since Edgar Allan Poe's first work, "The Murders on Morgue Rue" to the release of Agatha Christie's first best-seller "The Murder of Roger Ackroyd", and to analyse the modifications of this genre made by the author with a new pattern of how to write detective fiction after the creation of Hercule Poirot. It's necessary to understand the significance of previous works from the author to establish a rhythm on the contemporary novels that assume a different shape from the rise of Agatha Christie works.

Keywords. Literature, fiction, Agatha Christie.

1. Introduction

The crime fiction genre is denominated by the original idea of a crime occurring in a literature novel, connecting a enigma with a narrative build in a pattern established by years of construction of this genre. The genesis of the crime fiction is determined by the aim to solve the puzzle, understand the enigma and mystery that involves the narrative of suspense, where the author can use a diversity of literary resources to create the atmosphere of the history, the relationship between detective, characters and the problem, also providing the informations and structure of the crime and the solution of the mystery. (Reimão, 1983)

Following the key concept of the detective stories, Álvaro Lins, a brazilian author with focus on narrative concepts, that published the book "No mundo do romance policial", "[...] the true nucleus of the detective stories is in the murder, that has the privilege of put the reader in front of the mystery of death, that embrace the most excited and anxious feeling that scares the human nature." (Lins, 1917, p.19)

The origin of the denominated "detective stories" is based on the work of Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), starting from the release of the histories of Chevalier Dupin, in that way, determining a certain pattern to articulate the narrative of a genre raising from the idea of use the unusual and so transform it in literature. Since Poe's work began to create crime fiction, focusing on the solution of cases, a lot of authors had the courage to write bloody narratives using the enigmas to attract the readers, as an example, Arthur Conan Doyle and G. K. Chesterton

with the detectives Sherlock Holmes and Father Brown.

With the rise of Sherlock Holmes and the work of Arthur Conan Doyle, we have the raising of Agatha Christie and her first work: The Mysterious Affair at Styles, written in 1920. Since the release of her first book, Christie wrote more than 90 novels and 14 plays.

This work brings the literature review of her work, analyzing the narrative structure of the genre after Christie's first detective novel, observing the impacts of the historical period on her writing and an analysis of the crime fiction scenario from the 20's to the contemporary books from nowadays, with focus on the inspiration of Christie by a lot of new authors, as Richard Osman (The Thursday Murder Club) and Peter Swanson (Eight Perfect Murders).

2. Methodology

2.1 An overview on the crime fiction genre.

In the beginning of the genre, on Poe's narrative with Dupin, detective of "Murders in the Rue Morgue", the author establishes a pattern followed in the creation of the modern crime fiction narrative. Poe resigns the concept of literature in this genre, by publishing his stories in newspapers as a way to keep the reader occupied, proposing the idea to have a nice and stimulating time using the logic to solve a fictional crime.

The creation of the detective stories genre is a consequence of Poe's conception, made with the purpose of resigning the literature into a

combination of fiction and logic to write. The logical part of creative writing focuses on the action of building a certain structure for the narrative, paying attention to the interaction between characters, such as detective, narrator or others, space, time in the story and the facts. Meanwhile, the fictional part is occupied with the creativity, inspiration and fantasy, worked by the author on the pages.

One of the key concepts from the genre in a perspective of narrative analysis is the creation of two storylines that assume the role of basic structure of the genre in detective fiction, from Poe to Christie and contemporary novels. The fact that inside a crime fiction story occurs two points of narrative provokes how the investigation will be led by the detective in a partnership with its author. Thus, it's pointed out the crime itself, how it happened in the moment of the homicide or robbery (first story), and the process of investigation, the comprehension of past actions and the conducting of a cross-examination (second story).

Edgar Allan Poe brings a last conception of crime fiction, using a narrative resource of first person by the "detective's friend", that is at the same time someone to share the legacy of the genius mind from the protagonist that also helps him to solve the case, establishing a model followed by many authors, including Christie in her first work and Arthur Conan Doyle with Sherlock Holmes.

Conan Doyle obeys the concept created by Poe in the detective novels with an organized structure, working with a character that is splendid and brilliant as an advisor of the police, using logical thinking for the creation of the story by the author, and introducing the first person narrative in the literature of crime fiction genre.

That kind of narrator embraces the narrative with their own point of view. So that way, what the characters know about the investigation is what the reader understands. In the case of Watson, he is the man who wants to deify Sherlock Holmes' figure, with an uncountable series of crime stories, he is an outsider. With this amount of previous information, it's possible to identify Watson's narrative, by the elaboration of the story told from the narrator.

The last topic of the main concepts of the crime fiction is the relevance of the intention of intertextuality, beyond the uptake of verisimilitude in the story. The intertextuality of this works can be assumed by the relation on every story from the crime fiction, and assumes a higher level by the creation of the initiative on "The Detection Club". These two points are very important characteristics for the genre, to individualize each text or group of works in comparison with other stories from this fiction.

2.2 The historical period of Agatha Christie's literature.

Agatha Christie starts to write her first work after the period of the First World War and the introduction of a new vision of the world, followed by her acknowledgments from a previous experience as a nurse in the war hospitals.

The works from the authors dated to the golden age period, between the two World Wars, have been observed by the literature critics, and it's established a pattern for this genre. A distinctive format and rhythm for the story to be followed. This kind of novel is determined by the development of the investigation, the comprehension between the relations of detective and suspects, characters, the narrative structure made upon the situation which is dictated by the crime and its solution.

In the early 1920's, after traumatic events caused from the First World War finished in 1918, the mass was founded in a avoidance period of dense and intellectual pursuits. By that time, the jigsaw puzzles started to be published in magazines and newspapers, and the main objective was to entertain the population, to keep the citizens occupied and engaged in fictional enigmas after the war and a global flu pandemic.

The golden age of detective fiction evolved around the release of the first novel by Christie, but the influence for the creation of the Styles case was the book from 1913, written by E.C. Bentley, Trent's Last Case. Bentley began the idea of a challenge directed to the reader, introducing a different detective beyond the Sherlock Holmes archetype, established in the time as a standard. The character of the story, Trent, defined a new sort to the archetype of detective, that can be later observed on Christie's narrative, asking for the reader to join the investigation, insinuating the task to guess the murderer by using the same information as the detective in the novel.

The explanation of the fascination for murder can be perceived by the historical moment that the golden age of detective fiction was created. The world population, mainly in Europe, was devastated by the current events in this scenario, but why would there be a preference to read murder stories and death in literature? The answer can be found by an analysis of the fiction from the 1920's, where it is observed that even inducing the idea of a homicide, the literary stories of death and crime are just fictional. And the people were also determined and induced to find the person responsible for the crime in the company of the detective. In that way, murder becomes only a narrative resource for the author, to cause a trigger of curiosity in the reader's mind.

With an exception of "Hercule Poirot's Christmas", there is a bloodlessness in the fictional stories that can symbolize a revolt against the true events, the sanguinary chaos from 1914. Based on the concepts of time and space in the golden age, and in the role of Agatha Christie in the history, this study works with an analysis of the author's novels and the narrative structure together with the author's

acknowledgement about her previous experiences in a war scenario.

3. Discussion.

3.1 The Golden Age of Agatha Christie.

Working as an enigma and trying to ignore the consequences of fame, Agatha Christie once said to a student asking her biographic information: "Informations or biographies, articles about writers doesn't mean anything of interest - only facts. You have to study their books and the story, and write about this, not about who wrote the book."

Thereat, this work has the extreme focus on her novels and on the facts about the author that her crime stories are shown to the public. Not only in a literary importance view, but with a great interest in the narrative structure built upon years of devoting a life to detective fiction. Agatha Christie remains as a representative figure from a forgotten age, who fights in the literature for a place of study and importance in academia.

The persona of Christie as a detective fiction writer began in her childhood, writing poems and short stories of mystery, but the true construction of the crime fiction biggest author started with the impact of the First World War. After the events of her marriage with an officer from the Royal Flying Corps, Agatha became part of the Voluntary Aid Department, working as a pharmaceutical. Through the time of the war, Christie kept the habit to write detective stories for fun and entertainment in her free time in the hospital, a fact that transformed her routine as a writer.

By this time, she wrote her first famous work, that started initially with the basic concepts of structure introduced in this work, with the model of narrative from Sherlock Holmes. Based on a Belgium figure that used to live in Torquay, Agatha's hometown, she created her first detective, who later became one of the most famous characters in the literature, Hercule Poirot.

Poirot is the center of this analysis on the aspects of character development. The first appearance of the detective is in "The Mysterious Affair at Styles", novel released in 1920, by the point of view of Captain Hastings, that represents here the role of first-person narrator from Watson. The methodology from Agatha Christie stories: don't cover any information, and show the same amount of facts to the detective and to the reader, bringing the telespector to have a principal role in the story.

Is in her first novel that Agatha used her knowledge upon poisons and pharmaceuticals to create a plot on the narrative. After Styles, she made her way through the fame as the "Queen of Crime", writing a bunch of novels with her detectives, now divided in Tuppence and Tommy Beresford, superintendent Battle and Jane Marple, but was with Poirot that she became the most impressive name on the detective fiction by the

work of "The Murder of Roger Ackroyd".

Agatha Christie broke one of the concepts established by Conan Doyle and Poe's narratives, introducing for the first time in the history of the detective fiction a first-person narrator who was the original murderer of the crime, and developing a specific form of narrative for the genre. Agatha used the structure of hiding the character's thoughts from the reader, which transformed the conception of "reliable narrator".

Beyond that narrative, Agatha Christie also determined that her narrative's would be different in other novels, like "And Then Were None" or "Murder on the Orient Express", but "The Murder of Roger Ackroyd" was the first to show her abilities in deceive the reader and reformulate the facts on the genre, allowing her name to be one of the most singulars in the crime fiction literature.

3.2 The enigmas and mysteries of Christie.

Inserted on the the plot of Christie stories, the enigmas and mysteries of her narrative intertwine with the structure of the case, developed by the characters on the elapse of the investigation, determined by the suspects and detective.

The main character in Agatha Christie's stories, the role of detective, is what determines the rhythm of the plot, but always with focus on the discovery methods, in that case, the psychological methodology. That's because all the characters that perform that role use the methods of analyzing the psyche, the behavior and to study the actions and hidden signs of the other characters, as suspects or collaborators for the investigation. Hercule Poirot is one of the detectives that is never defeated by another person, even sometimes he is not the central character.

For the first time, the crime fiction presents detectives that are interested in one different type of analysis, not in a scientific or technological game, but the talent of Miss Marple and Monsieur Poirot in studying human nature and the hidden truths on the obvious behaviors. This action of the detective shows a mystery that can be solved by the human focus, and not as a mechanic like Sherlock Holmes and Dupin. This idea turns out as a more effective way to create recognition in the stories and inside the characters.

In the narrative analysis perspective, Agatha Christie presents on her more than 50 works, the author can introduce 55 types of mystery in her stories, using many literary resources, and bringing to the world of the crime fiction enigmas that are elaborated on modern and contemporary novels. These determinations on the genre are a secure cause for what the readers can call as "Agatha Christie type of mystery", or "a novel like Agatha Christie".

The author established a whole new gender by just repeating a pattern in her stories, causing a feeling in readers that they can recognize in other authors narratives, but always reflects in her works. The

aspects of these kinds of novels are very restricted. Inside the genre, the famous “whodunits” or “locked room” novels are permanent marks from Christie stories. Just like the atmosphere of the field, or the elite scenario. It’s important to remind that these elements are not properly owned by the author, but it’s also necessary to recognize that Agatha Christie is, nowadays, the responsible for disseminate these strict points on mystery novels.

Some of the works from Agatha Christie that presents these elements and can figure the creation of this “subgenre” are: “The Secret of Chymneys” (1925), “The Murder of Roger Ackroyd” (1926), “Partners in Crime” (1929), “Murder on the Orient Express” (1934), “The ABC Murders” (1935), “Dumb Witness” (1937), “And Then There Were None” (1939) and “Third Girl” (1967). These novels introduce to the genre something different and innovate the classical enigmas and mysteries from the Golden Age of detective fiction.

In “The Secret of Chymneys” (1925), the superintendent Battle shows to the readers the opposite of detective stories usually work, a police officer that solves a problem and it’s not a amateur detective using a method. Just like “Towards Zero” (1944), Battle introduces a plea to the critics from that period directly to the Scotland Yard.

“Partners in Crime” (1929) works with an obeisance to the detective stories from the Golden Age. In every chapter, that is a tale from Tuppence and Tommy, the couple decides to homage one famous detective on literature, by using his methods, like Father Brown and Sherlock Holmes, even Hercule Poirot.

“The ABC Murders” (1935), “Dumb Witness” (1937) and “Third Girl” (1967) innovate on the case for the investigation to be made. Each one brings a particular story, following the same aspect as “Lord Edgware Dies” (1933). An unusual crime is committed and Poirot it’s involved in the case.

In singular, it’s possible to isolate these works by the fact that they present to the genre a peculiar narrative structure. They introduce an element or literary resource that Agatha Christie changes the function inside her particular manner of writing, breaking prepositions about the genre that were made by critics or regular readers of her literature.

4. Conclusion.

Agatha Christie contributed with the Golden Age works and historical period for English literature, by diffusing a genre that was private for the readers of her time. She introduces a new pattern for the relation of detective and narrative structure, by the procedure of rupture of the literature made by Arthur Conan Doyle and Edgar Allan Poe.

Understanding that for a crime fiction work to exist, it’s necessary the connection between “detective-crime-characters”, and Agatha Christie introduces a different association for these aspects on the space-

time construction of detective fiction.

Her novels established the creation of a subgenre in modernity that is recognized by the young readers of her works and similar crime fiction novels as “cozy mystery”, determining an influence of Agatha Christie into the current literature and publishing market area.

It’s important to remember that Agatha Christie may not be the greatest name of her time, since the studies from crime fiction inside the literary academia are being developed day-by-day and new names from previous concepts are being discovered. But Agatha Christie is the one who carried the responsibility to share with other genre’s communities the capacity to attract the readers to a crime novel, by taking the aptness to write this specific genre and transforming it into the patterns of character development, detective archetype and narrative structure that we know today.

Agatha conquers the aspects of transformation from the classical concepts into a new way to write fiction novels, being recognized as one of the bestselling authors of the genre, and even bringing this fiction out of the specific community made by the readers, and introducing to the world what means to do a literary art from crime.

5. References

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